DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 077 094 EA 004 982

AUTHOR	Fox, Willard
TITLE	Can a School Really Be Administered Through Participatory Management?
PUB DATE	19 Mar 73
NOTE	6p.; Paper presented at American Association of School Administrators Annual Convention (105th, San Francisco, California, March 17-21, 1973)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Citizen Participation; *Decision Making; *Educational Administration; Goal Orientation; Parent Participation; *Participation; *Policy Formation; *School Districts; Speeches; Student Participation; Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS	*Participatory Management

ABSTRACT

Participative management includes a wide range of behavior in the education enterprise. It incorporates an involvement of more people in the educational process - people who are becoming more aware of the management problems in the education arena and who are actually changing what happens to students, teachers, and administrators. Where there is a working participative management there is a strong orientation towards goals, ample rewards for achieving goals, a uniting of people moving towards these goals, and a high level of leader enthusiasm. Participative management provides everyone with some input avenues to management decisions. A school can be administered through participatory management, particularly if the superintendent and the board understand what it really means in terms of their commitment and the resources of the district; they agree on the concept and its implementation; the superintendent's perceptions and understandings of the school system and our society are comprehensive; and a communications network exists to assure the superintendent of continual progress reports on all phases of the operation. (Author/JN)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
105th Annual Convention
San Francisco, Calif. March 17-21, 1973

ED 077094

SPEAKER: Willard Fox, Professor of School Administration, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

TOPIC: CAN A SCHOOL REALLY BE ADMINISTERED THROUGH PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT?

PLACE: Green Room, Fairmont Hotel

TIME: Monday, March 19, 2:30 P.M.

PROGRAM: Page 36 FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

An eminent behavioral scientist, whose research in the practices of management is renowned, expounded his theory that present managerial practices are all wrong, and that behavioral science research had discovered entirely new principles for the conduct of managerial duties. Since his conclusions were quite contrary to the experience of the members of the executive audience, they politely suggested that perhaps the professor had missed something important. The researcher was adamant: "Whether you like it or not, the facts show that present-day management methods are wrong !" One of the more outspoken members of the audience then delivered himself of a pungent opinion along these lines:

> Professor, you and your academic colleagues are running around naked with a bag over head yelling, "We'll save you, we'll save you!" You can't even save yourselves until you punch a couple of eyeholes in that bag and see what's really going on.

The topic of participatory management raises questions of definition, specters of powerlessness, and resistance.

The question of definition isn't easy to solve. Some of my superintendent friends say that participation is just another name for management team or administrative cabinet. Others say that participatory management occurs when citizens, councils or advisory committees are created. Some people say we can't really have participatory management until all the people affected by a decision have something to say about the decision.

A recent survey of students indicated that they wanted to participate in the teacher selection process. Many school districts like Centerville, Ohio, work at staff involvement in fiscal planning. Others talk about Community education concepts eminating from Flint, Michigan, Louisville, Kentucky, etc. Large city superintendents equate participatory management with decentralization. My academic colleagues see no real difference in the term under consideration and the phrase "management by objectives." Unions claim that the input they have at the table is a form of the practice. Actually we all kind of define participatory management as seen through our own eyeholes.

EA 004 982

Suffice it to say that participative management includes a very wide range of behavior in the education enterprise.

- more -

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Where does participative management come from? Why are we hearing about it now? Well frankly, its most recent home has been in the business world. We are attempting to adopt and adapt some principles expounded by theorists and practitioners in the business world. Perhaps the intermix we have of business men on school boards is partly responsible for the current attention to the topic. Perhaps, also, the changing nature of all of our public organizations is partly responsible. Jimmy Durante was right, you know, when he said, "Everyone wants ta get inta da act." This certainly is true today.

I searched Douglas McGregor and Chris Argyris for usable definitions so we could pinpoint our task today and came up empty handed. I feel more comfortable talking in terms of general conditions that exist to some degree in participatory management. Let's just say that participatory management means that we are involving more people in the educational process, people who by this involvement, are becoming more aware of the problems of management in the education area and who on the other hand, by their presence and their input, are actually changing what happens to kids, teachers, and administrators.

That's an aspect of participatory management we can't afford to overlook. What are some other definitional criteria?

Well, it has something to do with setting goals, both organizational and personal. This process must leave the hands of the autocrat and to some degree be assumed by other partners in the enterprise. Where you find participating management <u>working</u>, you find a strong orientation toward goals, ample rewards for achieving goals, a uniting of people moving toward these goals, and a high level of leader enthusiasm.

Everyone has some input avenues to management decisions.

Advantages

1. Schools can become a part <u>of</u> the community rather than apart <u>from</u> the community.

2. People involved can become people committed.

3. Management can relate to constituents on a more meaningful basis.

4. Subordinates expect that they will have an opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.

5. Raises the level of knowledge sharing and fact gathering before decisions are made.

6. You don't have to be an organizational "yes" man if you happen to be a subordinate.

7. The influence of the peer group is brought to bear on other members of the peer group who are not committed to organizational goals.

8. It is alleged to raise morale.

9. It is also said to raise productivity.

10. Individuals' ego needs come closer to being satisfied.

What are the disadvantages? Rather than listing the disadvantages, I'd like to try to put both the advantages and disadvantages in perspective by adapting an analogy originally used by George Odiorne.

He divided participatory management into various categories depending upon the degree of participatory management.

The first is the PALLIATIVE PAVILION which is a school where everybody gets a lot of satisfaction from his work in lieu of pay and benefits. He gets a seat at the decision making table and a chance to tell the superintendent he is an idiot, and the opportunity to take part in his co-workers cooperative council. He sits on junior boards. He speaks his mind freely. There is a fog which surrounds PALLIATIVE PAVILION and management doesn't really want to talk about it.

Next we come to the MORALE MUSEUM which is stuffed with enthusiastic people, mostly of the middle-class background and values. The MUSEUM rings with approval as these people of similar backgrounds continually work toward concensus as they participate in running the museum.

Right next door we have a similarly satisfied crew. This is the LOW TURNOVER TOWER. These people have been around a long time, in fact you couldn't get rid of them even if you cut off their--participation. They are, however, really hung up on participation and the responsibility of being acting historians of the system.

Next we come to ACCOMMODATION AVENUE where everybody is terrific on accepting change. They spend most of their time participating in things--are most obliging when it comes to accepting any changes--as long as they themselves thought of them. This accommodation, of course, doesn't extend to accepting change if the idea is thought of at the top and crammed down their throat, but that is one of the beauties of participatory management--nobody gets told much.

Since nobody dictates change or even suggests too firmly what changes should take place, the friendly folks on ACCOMMODATION AVENUE are very nice about accepting change.

Just a few more steps down to the basement brings us to the POWER EQUALIZATION machine which is constantly at work. This giant machine makes certain that a steady flow of adjustment occurs so that the superintendent and positional subordinates are always equal in management. If the superintendent should lose his head and start acting without involving the others in decisions, the POWER EQUALIZING machine goes into action and infuses the air around the superintendent with clouds of guilt, which he inhales regularly until it has affected him to return to normal participation behavior. In a severe case, where the superintendent holds his breath and stays autocratic--it takes some time before the POWER EQUALIZING machine works, but once in action, it seldom fails.

- more -

We now come to a questionable and rather sad spot, currently undergoing major alterations. It seems that for many years, theoretical college professors were bent on proving that HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY comes without delay or uncertainty from participation. That participatory management is so much more conducive to HIGH PRODUCTIVITY--that it beats the pants off results obtained autocratically. The trouble is that this idea doesn't always work. In fact, some theorists contradict others. For instance, one claims that close supervision leads to low productivity while another finds it directly related to high productivity. As we leave this scene we observe one group pumping murky fluid into a sump and another equally vigorously committed group pumping it out.

Reports from way down below, AUTOCRATIC LAND, occasionally filter back to this heaven of participatory management. Here, the superintendent runs the show, makes all the decisions, and second guesses himself. He tells people what to do, how to do it, and raises hell if they don't.

Unfortunately, theorists (those naked professors) haven't spent much time studing autocratic behavior, since apparently it is naughty and should be eliminated, and therefore what is the sense of studying something that is going to be eliminated?

The reports, however, continue to arrive with anecdotes about school districts that are doing outstanding jobs in area after area, while sticking religiously to outmoded autocratic methods. There are also verbal reports, not verified by the powerful tools of the questionnaire and interview and purified by the computer, that AUTOCRATIC LAND produces a goodly number of leaders at the top level.

Well, if we don't really know what participatory management is, and if we are not sure whether it works better than something we already have--where does this leave us?

Since we have five panel members, I thought I'd raise about five questions for their consideration before the audience gets to sink their teeth into the topic. You know in Ohio we have five member school boards and just looking at this great panel reminds me of a school board story.

1. Should we continue to allow a rather specific business management term such as participatory management to be used in so many different ways in the educational arena? Does variation from the standard really make a difference? Perhaps the use of the term is simply indicative of a movement toward the involvement of more people in public education. If this true, the question arises: Is this the best term to indicate what is happening? Does the use of this or any term have an effect on practice? If we use the term participatory management--inject it full boat into the stream of education jargon, will it cause more administrators to practice more participatory management?

Will the fact that the term as used, doesn't fit the conceptual framework of businessmen on school boards, cause problems?

2. What is the difference in effect when a superintendent honestly and openly tries to use a participatory management technique and when another superintendent tries to arrange and handle the process so he doesn't lose "control" of what comes next or of the results?

Is a superintendent's job more "on the line" when he engages in the practice of participatory management than when he relies on methods he has used successfully over the years?

Are the benefits of involvement, understanding, improved morale and increased productivity enough to warrant a change in a superintendent's modus operandi?

Does it actually mean that a man must change his leadership style and can a person really do this?

3. What does a superintendent need to know about participatory management before he adopts and adapts another "new" innovation? Should he go to school and listen to the naked professors? Should he attend seminars of the American Management Association?

What do successful and unsuccessful practitioners have to say about preflight preparation?

Is moving toward participatory management a step of major consequence? Once committed, can you tell the shareholders that you've changed your mind or that the principle applies only in certain circumstances? Can a superintendent start out slowly and just gradually introduce the concept into practice without upsetting existing apple carts?

Where is the best place to start? Are there certain circumstances and situations that are more likely to lead to successful introduction of the concept? As beginners look ahead, where are the curves and dips in the road? Where does it straighten out to a multi-lane expressway that speeds a district to its goals better and faster than before?

4. Is there a difference in providing leadership to a school system under the conventional and time tested practices and providing leadership over a multi-dimensional process involving many more people? Is participatory management just another more involved form of delegation?

What happens when various participatory groups come up with conflicting recommendations? Does a superintendent and board lose or gain power when they share the decision making process? Is this good or bad? Is there a possibility that the process could turn the Superintendent and board into rubber stamps? Does leadership by participatory management take more time and require more money?

5. Do people have a greater desire <u>now</u> to take part in decisions that effect them than they had in the past? Isn't it true that many people feel more secure when the decisions are made for them? Perhaps the desire to participate is quite different in some communities than in others? Is there a useable guideline for measuring the level of desire to participate?

Does a superintendent have to wait until his school is besieged by thousands of people with tar, feathers, brush and a rail, chanting, complaining, and vandalizing to know that the people want to participate? What are some clues?

Are there community forces that are interested in and capable of blocking the process of participative management?

What kinds of extra sensory perception should the advocate superintendent have if he is to successfully integrate the process in his community?

How can a superintendent tell how far his community is willing to go in implementing the concept?

Well, here goes this naked professor back to the beginning--the question isn't really whether or not superintendents know what the reality of educational leadership is--but whether the professors know what reality consists of.

"Can a school really be administered through participatory management?" I do have an answer and will be glad to share the same with the audience but I do think that it's more appropriate at this stage of the program to hear from some reality based people.

"Can a school really be administered through Participatory Management?"

The answer is SURE--providing certain conditions exist:

1. The superintendent and the board should understand what participatory management really means in terms of their commitment and the resources of the district. They should agree on the concept and its implementation as well as some definitive points.

2. The superintendent's personality and value structure must be amenable to the process.

3. More than a small minority of those you intend to include must desire to participate.

4. Goals are clearly understood by all the people that are working together.

5. The superintendent's perceptions and understandings of the school system and our society should be quite comprehensive. (This no gimmick panacea for the green novice that wants an answer to all his problems in one easy to handle package.)

6. Public relation aspects of the introduction, expansion, and continual use of the concept need to be carefully thought out in advance.

7. A communications network needs to exist that assures the superintendent of continual progress reports on all phases of the operation.

###